

# VACCINATION.

A

## FEW OBSERVATIONS

ON

# VACCINATION,

TOGETHER WITH

## TESTIMONIES IN ITS FAVOUR;

EXTRACTED CHIEFLY

FROM THE REPORTS OF MEDICAL BOARDS.

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1831.

THE PROXYMANT

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THE following observations are submitted to the public, and especially to PARENTS, in the hope that they may tend to remove some of the prejudices which are still entertained against the practice of Vaccination. And when it is considered that the subjoined testimonies in favour of Vaccination are given by persons whose private interests are materially injured by the adoption of the practice, it is presumed they will be received with the full credit to which they are entitled. Candid minds will never suspect that an honourable profession could be biassed, by private interest, to give a false colouring to measures involving the lives of individuals, and the public prosperity; neither can the most uncandid persuade themselves, that any body of men would wilfully give such a colouring, when not only no benefit was to result to themselves from so doing, but, on the contrary, a heavy pecuniary loss. And it must be kept in mind, that the curing

of Small-pox has always been accounted among the most lucrative branches of medical practice.

Since the introduction of Small-pox into Europe, there is, perhaps, no disease which has produced a greater number of deaths.

It has been supposed to destroy a *sixth-part* of all whom it attacks ; and until Vaccination was practised, nearly *one-tenth*, and in some years *more than one-tenth*, of the whole mortality in London was occasioned by Small-pox.

When Vaccination first came into practice, some ignorant and obstinate persons violently opposed it ; and a few scrupulous persons received it with diffidence. It was asserted that Vaccination produced new diseases in the constitution, and that it was no protection against Small-pox ; whereas the advocates of Vaccination contended that if its practice were generally adopted, Small-pox might, by degrees, be altogether exterminated.

On a matter so important, it seemed good to Parliament to address his Majesty, requesting that *The Royal College of Physicians of London* might be called upon to state their opinion. This they did, after investigating the subject fully and impartially ;—calling for information from the best possible sources—from the *Colleges of Physicians of Dublin and Edinburgh* ; and from the *Colleges of Surgeons of London, Edinburgh, and Dublin* ; from the members of their own body throughout every part of the kingdom ; and, in short, from every

individual who had any information to communicate.

The Report which they made was to the following effect, and it was ordered by Parliament to be printed for the general information of the people. They state, that after obtaining a body of evidence so large, so temperate, and so consistent as was, perhaps, never before collected on any medical question; and being enabled to speak with a confidence arising from their advancing nothing that has not been proved by actual observation, the following is their deliberate opinion;—viz.

“ That Vaccination does less mischief to the constitution, and less frequently gives rise to other diseases, than the Small-pox, either natural or inoculated ;

“ That the security derived from Vaccination against the Small-pox, if not absolutely perfect, is nearly so ;

“ That amongst *several hundred thousand* cases, the number of alleged failures has been surprisingly small ; so much so, as to form no reasonable objection to the general adoption of Vaccination ; since it appears that there are not nearly so many *failures* in a given number of vaccinated persons, as there are *deaths* in an equal number of persons inoculated for the Small-pox ;

“ That in the *few* cases where Small-pox, whether by inoculation or by casual infection, had succeeded Vaccination, the disease has varied much from its ordinary course ; it has



neither been the same in the violence, nor in the duration of its symptoms, but has, with very few exceptions, been remarkably mild, as if the Small-pox had been deprived, by the previous Vaccination, of all its usual malignity ;

“ That Vaccination seldom prevents those under it from following their ordinary occupations ;

“ That it has been communicated with safety to persons in the most delicate state of health ; to children during the time of teething, and in their earliest infancy ; in all which respects it possesses material advantages over inoculation for the Small-pox ;

“ That towns, and whole districts of the country, in which Vaccination had been general, have afterwards had the Small-pox prevalent on all sides of them, *without suffering from the contagion* ;

“ That the *objections* urged against Vaccination originate in *gross ignorance*, or proceed from *wilful misrepresentation* ;

“ That, from the whole of the above considerations, the College of Physicians feel it their duty *strongly to recommend the practice of Vaccination* ; and they conclude by stating, that they have been led to make this recommendation by no preconceived opinion, but by the most unbiassed judgment, formed from an irresistible weight of evidence, which has been laid before them. For when the number, the respectability, the disinterestedness, and the extensive experience of its advocates, is com-

pared with the feeble and imperfect testimonials of its few opposers; and when it is considered that many, who were once adverse to Vaccination, have been convinced by further trials, and are now to be ranked among its warmest supporters, the truth seems to be established as firmly as the nature of such a question admits; so that the College of Physicians conceive, that the public may reasonably look forward, with some degree of hope, to the time when all opposition shall cease, and the general concurrence of mankind shall at length be able to put an end to the ravages, at least, if not to the existence, of the Small-pox."

Nor is the above the only testimony that may be adduced in favour of Vaccination. After a further experience of thirteen years, and after the most minute attention had been paid to the effects of Vaccination, in every part of the world, the following voluntary declaration was made by the Royal College of Surgeons of London; and it will be observed, that the list of names includes all those who were at the time most eminent for skill, and distinguished by the extent of their practice, as well as by the length of their experience.

"We, the undersigned, Master, Governors, and Members of the Court of Assistants of the Royal College of Surgeons in London, deeply impressed with the many fatal instances of Small-pox, which daily occur in the metropolis, and in various parts of the kingdom, assured that such results are in a great degree

consequences of the support and propagation of that disease by inoculation, and unshaken in our confidence of the *efficacy of Vaccination in exterminating Small-pox*, from a sense of duty to the community, hereby renew the engagement entered into by us, in the year 1813, *not to inoculate Small-pox*, but to pursue, and to the utmost of our power, promote the practice of *Vaccination*. And we earnestly recommend to all members of the College, similar engagements; convinced that the entire extinction of Small-pox would be the happy result of the suppression of inoculation of that disease, and the universal adoption of *Vaccination*."

THOMAS FOSTER, *Master*.

EVERARD HOME,

WILLIAM BLIZARD,

} *Governors*.

G. CHANDLER,

T. KEATE,

J. HEAVISIDE,

H. CLIVE,

D. DUNDAS,

W. NORRIS,

J. A. HAWKINS,

F. KNIGHT,

L. HARVEY,

W. LYNN,

J. ABERNETHY,

A. P. COOPER,

W. LUCAS,

T. CHEVALIER,

J. WILSON,

H. L. THOMAS,

L. HARVEY.

*London, Oct. 13, 1820.*

All subsequent Reports, made by medical bodies, strongly confirm the foregoing favourable opinions of *Vaccination*; and we shall now content ourselves with giving one extract



from the last Report made by the National Vaccine Establishment, to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, dated 14th March, 1831. The Report concludes thus:—

“ The result of another year’s experience is a confirmation of the value of Vaccination. We have evidence before us of persons being exposed to the severest trials of its power of protection in the midst of the contagion of the Small-pox, with impunity; and though some constitutions do admit a secondary disease, yet this is almost always a safe one, though severe in some instances in its first attack; and it is not so common as the Chicken-pox used to be, after Small-pox given by inoculation.”

(Signed)

HENRY HALFORD, *President of the Royal College of Physicians.*

ROBERT BREE, M.D. *Censor.*

G. L. TUTHILL, M.D. *Censor.*

ROBERT KEATE, *President of the Royal College of Surgeons.*

JOHN P. VINCENT, *Vice-President of the Royal College of Surgeons.*

To the foregoing testimonies, it might be thought impertinent to add those of a more confined or local nature; we will, therefore, conclude with simply recommending that all persons who are vaccinated, should be submitted for examination to the operator on the seventh or eighth day; that it may be ascer-

tained whether the inoculation has taken effect. Some constitutions withstand the inoculation two or three times; and, generally speaking, medical men are the only safe judges of its being complete.

From defective inoculation, much mischief has resulted to individuals, and much prejudice against the practice. Negligence on this point has often led to the supposition that Small-pox had succeeded Cow-pox, when, in fact, there had been no Cow-pox; the vaccine inoculation not having taken effect.

It is to be feared that there will always be found persons weak or wicked enough to reject the means with which Providence has furnished them of protecting themselves and their offspring from the danger of Small-pox; no law exists for preventing inoculation for this loathsome disease; but it should be known that a law does exist for preventing the spreading of the disease, by *exposing* patients affected with it.

Every such exposure, whether in the streets or public roads, or at the door or window of the patient, is an indictable offence, and punishable by imprisonment.

Two cases were lately brought before the Court of King's Bench; in the one, a mother was *imprisoned three months* for carrying her child about the streets; and, in the other, a surgeon was *imprisoned six months*, for ordering a child, affected with Small-pox, to be brought to his shop from time to time for examination.

Parish authorities would do a public service by prosecuting in every case of this kind. The safety of the great body of the people ought not to be hazarded by the folly or wickedness of a few. Hardly any others but these will now inoculate for Small-pox; and, indeed, this inoculation is for the most part only practised by those who are not members of the profession;—by quacks and ignorant people, who have no reputation at stake,—whose only object is gain,—and who care not how many lives are sacrificed to that object.

The inoculation for Cow-pox is a very simple operation; and in parishes where no surgeon resides, the clergyman, or any other person, may apply for lymph for inoculation by Letter addressed

“ To Dr. HUE, Registrar of the N. V. E.,  
Russell Place, Fitzroy Square.”

*And inclosed in an outside cover, directed thus :*

<p>To the Right Hon<sup>ble</sup> The Secretary of State, Home Department, Whitehall.</p> <p><i>National Vaccine Establishment.</i></p>
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May 25, 1831.

THE END.

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